



## ABOUT US



### **Vision**

Children grow up free from abuse

### **Mission**

Ensure that the voices of children are heard and understood in cases of alleged abuse

### **Child First Doctrine**

*The child is our first priority*

Not the needs of the family  
Not the child's "story"  
Not the evidence  
Not the needs of the courts

## Leadership Message



I sometimes struggle with the mixed messages in our culture about how we value children. We describe them as our future, our most precious loves and yet we turn our backs on abuse and exploitation. We adore sweet photos of innocent little ones and yet support budget cuts which will assure lack of resources for those who live in unsafe situations.

If you are reading this newsletter, you are one of thousands of dedicated supporters working to assure that children are safe from abuse. At CornerHouse, we work diligently to assure that the environment is warm and welcoming to children and adolescents who are coming here because there is reason to be concerned about their safety. For more than 21 years, we've been here for them. We are proud to be able to offer this service and strive each day to improve the quality of our practice.

But that's not enough. We need to work together as a community to prevent child abuse. The elimination of the exploitation and abuse of children is the vision for a real future for our children.

During the month of April, Child Abuse Awareness Month is taking place throughout the country. CornerHouse has the good fortune of dedicated volunteer supporters who have developed a series of efforts to raise awareness. I hope that you can participate in some way. Details are available on our FaceBook page as well as our website. Add a pinwheel to our garden which will delight every child who arrives at our doorstep. Put a Blue Kid on your lawn or in front of your business. Host a Pinwheel House Party to tell your neighbors about CornerHouse and child abuse.

These are tiny steps and essential for those of us who believe that children must be safe. Thank

Not the needs of the police,  
child protection or attorneys

*The child is our first priority*

## **Act Fast**

**Limited space still available in  
Forensic Interview Training at  
CornerHouse for:**

*May 14-18, 2012*

### **From the Back of the House**

There are many people who work diligently in the background to serve the children and teens that come to CornerHouse to be helped, supported, and heard. This series will keep you posted on the transitions in the "back of the house" as they occur:

#### **Volunteers:**

We've been fortunate to add more members to our Family Services volunteer team! Please help us welcome: **Amanda, Nicole, Jordan & Lindsey.**

CornerHouse is also delighted to welcome the following new members to the governing body:

**Kevin Fossum** – Pinnacle Properties

**Chief Mike Reynolds** – City of Hopkins

**Chris Staley** – Horizontal Integration

you for joining us in living the value of the "village"-- sharing in the care of its most vulnerable citizens.

Sincerely,

Patricia Harmon  
Executive Director



April 4th was such a fun day at CornerHouse! We had many guests enjoy tours of CornerHouse, chat with our staff and plant pinwheels in our garden!!! If you missed out on the fun, our next Open CornerHouse is on Wed, April 18 from 4 to 6 PM. We hope to welcome you then! If you are unable to attend, visit our [website](#) to purchase a pinwheel or Blue Kid to celebrate Child Abuse Awareness Month!

### **Transitions**

We bid a fond farewell to Sonya Steven as she leaves the Hennepin County Attorney's Office to enter retirement. Sonya has been a fixture at CornerHouse for several years, and we will really miss her humor and sharp intellect. We will be excited to hear about all of Sonya's new adventures. We are also excited to welcome Grace Song from the Hennepin County Attorney's Office to our multi-disciplinary team! She will be part of a three-person rotating team of attorneys, serving regular shifts at CornerHouse.

## **Tell Me Everything**

CornerHouse has always integrated research findings into our interviewing practices. In fact, the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol is unique in that it is based on best practices

## Volunteer Needs

We need volunteers for the following positions:

- Family Service
- Administration

Please contact Rut if you or someone you know is interested in volunteering!

[Rut.Newman@childrensmn.org](mailto:Rut.Newman@childrensmn.org)

## Volunteer Spotlight

### Mike Ferber, Training Assistant



Mike started at CornerHouse in September of 2011. He has been helping every Friday morning since then entering data, assembling manuals, mastering the copy machine, picking up and delivering pizza, assembling pin wheels and more. He loves that we have a steady supply of coffee and bubble gum for him!

Mike applied for the position because he knew the Volunteer Coordinator and he supports the mission of CornerHouse, but he was also eager to help out in an office setting. Mike owns his own consulting business, helping small and medium Non-Profits with their fundraising efforts. Since he works out of a home office setting, he wanted to make

derived from both rigorous research and interviewer experiences. Recent research has shown that more accurate statements come from spontaneous, free-flowing narrative and that when people are encouraged to practice providing this narrative in the “rapport” stage, they provide more details later in the interview process.

A forensic interview is a unique interaction, unlike any other conversation between an adult and a child. Unlike a teacher, parent or other authority figure, a forensic interviewer does not know the answers to the questions being asked. The child is the expert in the interview room. Because a child may arrive for a forensic interview with some anxiety, it helps to provide an opportunity to practice a forensic conversation about a non-forensic topic during the “rapport” stage of the interview. Ideally, the interviewer will ask open-ended questions about a neutral topic that the child has mentioned, eliciting details from both script memory (things that happen all the time, such as school) and episodic memory (unique events such as yesterday’s basketball game) (Cordisco-Steele, 2010). When more direct prompts are necessary for clarification, the interviewer will return to open-ended questions as soon as possible.

Practicing this kind of conversation early in the interview helps lay the groundwork for more successful inquiry about the substantive topic of conversation. Sternberg et al. (1997) found that building rapport by using open-ended questions about both the child’s everyday life and a recent event helped interviewers later draw out more abuse-relevant information. Interviewers are able to use the same types of questions in both the “rapport” and “abuse scenario” stages of the interview, thereby maximizing the child’s comfort and competence.

Older children and adolescents are developmentally able to provide more extended narrative in response to open-ended questions. However, even very young children can provide significant details about their experiences when questioned in an open-ended and developmentally-appropriate manner (Lamb et al., 2003).

CornerHouse has begun to integrate “narrative practice” into every interview as we build rapport, as a strategy to help clients provide the most comprehensive and spontaneous information possible. Wendy Anderson, a doctoral student in social work, is currently conducting research on our implementation of narrative practice at CornerHouse. We are excited to learn about the impact of narrative practice on disclosures among CornerHouse clients, thereby advancing the field and contributing to the development of best practices.

#### References:

Cordisco Steele, L. (2010). Narrative Practice: What is it and why is it important? The National Children's Advocacy Center. Research-to-Practice Summary , June 2010

Lamb, M. E., Sternberg, K. J., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P. W., Stewart, H., & Mitchell, S. (2003). Age differences in young children’s responses to open-ended invitations in the course of forensic interviews. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71, 926–934

sure he immerses himself into a busy office environment once in a while to keep his computer skills sharp and to enjoy the office atmosphere.

Working with Sandy in the Training Department, filling a need of that growing part of CornerHouse, gives Mike a sense of helping a growing organization and purpose.

Being useful is something Mike seems to feed on. He is involved many, many non-profits – helping and volunteering somehow:

Eagan's July 4th Funfest Committee  
 AFAA Walk Committee  
 Thrivent Financial NDC Chapter Board  
 Eagan Yellow Ribbon Committee  
 Ambassador for the Dakota County Regional Chamber  
 Can Do Canines Puppy Raiser and Foster  
 Miata Club member

He is also an avid runner with the "Don't forget to breathe" running club and a passionate Facebook user!

We are so glad he has found the time and passion to help us at CornerHouse!!!

## CornerHouse Wish List:

[find our wish list at Amazon.com!](#)

Sternberg, K. J., Lamb, M. E., Hershkowitz, I., Yudilevitch, L., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P.W., & Hovav, M. (1997). Effects of introductory style on children's abilities to describe experiences of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 21, 1133–1146.



## Twins

The amazing Twins Event Committee has plans underway for the 21st Annual Twins Event! [Tickets are already on sale for the July 17 game against the Baltimore Orioles.](#) Ticket options include home plate view seats as well as the popular bleacher seats. A pre-game celebration including a live auction, a silent auction, yummy goodness provided by Divine Swine and games for the kids, will be held at the Epic Event Center. Hope you can join us!

## April 15 through April 21 is National Volunteer Week!

We'd like to thank our 74 currently active volunteers and all of you that have volunteered with us in the past!! So far in 2012 you have contributed over 800 hours already! And in 2011 it was a total of 2,578 hours!!! Thank you for everything that you do for CornerHouse!!!

## Upcoming CornerHouse Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training Schedules

CornerHouse Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center would like to announce the following availability in its 2012 training schedule.

**Examples:**

- Coloring books
- Stencils, stamps, stickers
- Toy train set
- Children's books
- Floor lamp
- Dishwasher

**Or donate Gift cards:**

- Cub Foods
- Target
- Sam's Club
- Ikea
- Amazon

*Please call  
Sharon McLaughlin at  
612-813-8334 if you wish to  
make a donation.*

**Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview training at CornerHouse in Minneapolis, MN**

This training teaches a credible, reliable and non-traumatic forensic interview process for children and vulnerable adults who allege sexual abuse. Training methods consist of lecture and discussion, review of CornerHouse videotaped interviews, skill-building exercises and an interview practicum. The course is designed for teams of law enforcement investigators, child protection investigators, prosecutors and forensic interviewers. Participants are strongly encouraged to attend as a multi-disciplinary team. Courses are outcome based and include an exam upon completion. Course Fee: \$950

*May 14-18, 2012*

*July 9-13, 2012*

*August 13-17, 2012*

*October 1-5, 2012*

*November 5-9, 2012*

**CornerHouse Advanced Forensic Interview Training**

This training course is for forensic interviewers, child protection workers, tribal social service investigators, law enforcement officers and prosecuting attorneys who have completed the required prerequisites. The course teaches advanced forensic interviewing skills including; modifications to the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol: RATAc® for physical abuse and other violent crimes, physical evidence in the forensic interview, autism spectrum disorders, multi-session forensic interviews, a mock cross examination demonstration and active participation in peer review using a variety of written assessment tools. Advanced training course at CornerHouse in Minneapolis, MN: Course Fee: \$850

**Prerequisites**

**1)** Completion of one of the following basic interviewing courses:

- CornerHouse Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training or On-Site Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training
- ChildFirst™
- Finding Words™
- First Witness™

**2)** Completion of a minimum of fifteen (15) interviews using RATAc® (requirement waived for prosecutors)

*July 31-August 3, 2012*

*December 4-7, 2012*

For registration, please contact Sandy Heitkamp at (612) 813-8310 or [sandra.heitkamp@childrensmn.org](mailto:sandra.heitkamp@childrensmn.org)

Visit our website: <http://www.cornerhousemn.org>



Follow us on Facebook and Twitter too!



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